



REVETMENTS

The Official Journal of The Tan Son Nhut Association

A Memorial to the American Experience in Vietnam



SEPTEMBER 2024

Chaplain's Corner-Insights from Proverbs By Andy Csordas, Associate Chaplain

This month I thought it might be good to just remind us about some of the wisdom that the scriptures give us. This of course is not complete as there is wisdom to be gained every time we read God's word. This is a very small part of the insights Proverbs can give us. We can read the same scripture passage many times and still see something new the next time we read that same passage. Solomon, called the smartest man to ever live, wrote almost all of the book of Proverbs; let's look at just a few of the topics he spoke about.

Wisdom

Proverbs 1:7, The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise **wisdom** and instruction.

Proverbs 2:1-3, My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, So that you incline your ear to **wisdom**, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding,

Proverbs 2:6-7. For the Lord gives **wisdom**; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding, He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly;

Proverbs 2:10-11, When **wisdom** enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you,

Proverbs 19:11, A man's patience gives him wisdom, it is to his glory to overlook an offence.

Humility

Proverbs 15:33, The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor is **humility**.

Proverbs 18:12, Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty, and before honor is **humility**.

Proverbs 22:4, By **humility** and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life.

Righteousness

Proverbs 10:2, Treasures of wickedness profit nothing, but **righteousness** delivers from death.

Proverbs 10:7, The memory of the **righteous** is blessed, but the name of the wicked will rot.

Proverbs 10:20, The tongue of the **righteous** is choice silver; the heart of the wicked is worth little.

Proverbs 11:4, Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but **righteousness** delivers from death.

Heart

Proverbs 11:20, Those who are of a perverse **heart** are an abomination to the Lord, but the blameless in their ways are His delight.

Proverbs 14:30, A sound **heart** is life to the body, but envy is rottenness to the bones.

Proverbs 14:33, Wisdom rests in the heart of him who has understanding, but what is in the heart of fools is made known.

Proverbs 16:21, The wise in heart will be called prudent, and sweetness of the lips increases learning.

So, to conclude what does God want? He wants a humble and clean heart. He can give us the wisdom needed to achieve those goals. So often we go on our own, let God plan your steps, including the big and the little stuff, before you make decisions. Remember **Proverbs 16:33** tells us, ***"The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD."***

***Opinions expressed are the author's and not necessarily those of the Tan Son Nhut Association**



Do you have a desire to serve your fellow Vietnam Veterans?



The Tan Son Nhut Association is seeking volunteers who would like to serve on committees, Board of Directors, or as Officers of the Organization



If you have a desire to serve, please contact Paul Mortensen at: tsnareunions@gmail.com.
or
Visit TSNA.org for more information on the organization

Another Recollection about Phu My Orphanage

By: Rich Carvell, VP, TSNA

During my tour of duty in Vietnam June 1970 - 1971, I was the OIC of the Photo Lab at the 12th Reconnaissance Intelligence Technical Squadron at Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Saigon. I also was my unit's Civic Action Officer, an extra-duty assignment I volunteered for when the person who held that job rotated back to the U.S.

Our Civic Action project was the orphanage at Sanctuary de Phu My in Saigon. Phu My was operated by a German order of Roman Catholic Church Nuns but all of the Nuns at the Sanctuary were Vietnamese. Phu My had about 70 orphans in its care.

We made trips to Phu My every week to help when we could but mostly just to visit with the children at the orphanage.

On my orientation trip after I was appointed Civic Action Officer, I met the only two folks at the orphanage who could speak English; that was good for me because I knew little, if any, of the Vietnamese language. One of those folks was a civilian staff member at Phu My.

The other was a lady who lived in the retired housing at Phu My. And what an experience meeting her it was! We stood outside her room at Phu My and talked. She told me her story.

Seems that many years before that time and before the war, she met and married a guy from Texas who was working on a project in Saigon. After he finished the project in Vietnam, he and his new Vietnamese spouse left Vietnam and headed for Texas. After arriving in the U.S., she was enrolled in Texas Women's College in Denton, Texas, to begin work toward a college degree.

But she told me, she learned her Texas husband was not true to her ... that he was seeing other women. So, she left him, left Texas and returned to her home country, Vietnam.

And she ended her story with this comment: "Worst mistake I ever made."

After she finished her Texas story, she asked if I had a candy bar to give to her. I did not, but I knew that one of the Airmen with us that day did have a candy bar, so I borrowed it from him and gave it to her. I never visited Phu My again without a candy bar for my new friend.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following story by George Starks was first written and published in 2015.

So rather than change or eliminate a lot of references to numbers, I am publishing this just as before.

So remember, the timing of "45 years ago", is now "54 years ago"!

Good Mourning, Vietnam

By: George Starks, May 70 - May 71 377th CSG

Early last Spring my wife and I received an invitation to join the November wedding party of a close friend in Vietnam.

With a quick Google assist, I discovered that the functions of a 'best man' in Saigon are, with a few distinguishable exceptions, much the same as they are in, say, Topeka, Saginaw, or Kokomo. What is not the same, however, is the backdrop. Saigon and Saginaw are very much unlike.

Having first met Tuan only a year earlier in Spain while walking the Camino de Santiago, the 500-mile 'Way of St. James' Pilgrimage across Northern Spain, being invited to his traditional wedding ceremony in this major Southeast Asian city was a total coupe.

His equally generous offer to provide us with living quarters in his spacious, modern condo in Saigon's District

7 came as an equal bonus! We were in!

I later learned that I was a stand-in of sorts for Tuan's elderly father who was confined to a nursing home in the States. I felt honored. The five other party members included young men from Cambodia, Brazil, Japan, Taiwan, and Germany. I was the only Yank, being acquainted with only one other 'best man' in the group, Hans from Munich, with whom I had hiked in Spain two years earlier.

This new out-of-the-blue opportunity for overseas travel, as joyously-received as it was, came with a not so small degree of hesitation. 45 years ago, to the month I had this war-torn country in my rear-view mirror, as a departing lower-level NCO assigned to the 377 Combat Support Group at Tan Son Nhut Air Base outside of Saigon.

For me, Vietnam was a done deal. My bags were packed and in the popular jargon of the day, I was *leaving on a jet plane...*

The last occupying force in Vietnam had learned the hard way, despite General Matt Ridgeway's admonition that to get into a land war on the Asian continent was sheer madness, with France's own Waterloo eventually being the fall of Dien Bien Phu in the Spring of 1954. Ours was yet to come, taking place on an embassy rooftop in Saigon 21 years later.

General LeClerc's expeditionary force in 1945, re-filling the vacuum of the retreating Japanese, predated our own Green Berets fending off of the so-scripted 'Red Tide' 15 years later.

America, despite its best intentions, was about to learn a long, painful lesson in futility, with nearly 60,000 mothers across the nation sharing in that painful lesson. It's been noted that more than one million Vietnamese - civilian and military - were lost in consecutive wars with France, Japan, and the United States.

Now, 42 years later, the same 23-year-old buck sergeant who gamely negotiated the back streets of Saigon in another lifetime has evolved into an inspired fellow traveler equally at home exploring remote European villages and weekend farmers' markets dotting America's heartland. Saigon *now*. Big, bold, and bodacious. Awash with pretty girls and beautiful children, darkened bars, careening *cyclos*, ornate French colonial hotel lobbies, pricey boutique shops, and rivers of fawning sellers hawking everything from beads to banjos.

Not to be discounted, the clattering din of the screeching motorbike - in Vietnam, all motorbikes are called *hondas*, regardless of brand name - ever symptomatic of the mystical East's urban sprawl since time in memorial.

Vivacious, heartfelt, loving of Westerners, enterprising, cordial, and always mystical. Dong Khoi Street, formerly Rue Catinat Street under the French and renamed Tu Do Street during the American occupation, once rife with bars, strip joints, brothels, and massage parlors, now home to fancy restaurants, upscale boutique shops, and elegant nightclubs.

The hollow echo of carousing American GIs parading along Tu Do Street now given way to high end fashion outlets, sparkling specialty stores, and the constant din of commerce delayed.

The same Dong Khoi Street, anchored by a dung-colored Saigon River at one end and the stately Notre Dame Cathedral ala Parisian look-alike at the other, with Graham Greene's iconic Continental Hotel holding down the mid-section. Now all patrolled by a red and green-clad police force, adept at juggling dangling menthol Cools and swinging AK-47's with equal ease.

One is unavoidably aware of America and Vietnam's tumultuous history together, with leafy boulevards and overgrown French villas constant reminders of longtime anti-communist occupations; memorabilia-saturated war museums seemingly spreadeagled on every street corner.

One-time 'Paris of the Orient' Saigon, where heady memories of the sixties maintain a musty presence in shop windows amid rusty wartime Zippo lighters, army-green fashion wear, Peter Max psychedelic posters in primary colors, and glitzy coffee table books showcasing Uncle Ho and General Giap's revolutionary bravado compete for shelf space with soft copies on Zen and Taoism. Glowing accounts of facing down Western capi-

talists cum rancid imperialistic dogs of war cast a shadow over everything with a bar code. A grandfatherly Uncle Ho beams pleasantly down from a 20-foot wall mural at the downtown post office turned souvenir heaven, reassuring all that it was simply the cost of doing business.

Sepia-colored postcards of General Giap, communist mastermind of the Viet-Minh victory over doomed French Legionnaires at a besieged French outpost close to the Laotian border so many years earlier (evoking a still poignant *L'Internationale*) crowd glass counter-tops as shoppers surge forward, vying for attention in a kaleidoscope of mother tongues. Grainy images of French paratroopers and American Green Berets feed an edgy nostalgia for the war years... as *Dien Bien Phu* and *Ke San* trip off the tongue with equal ease. Winning the battles but losing the wars on poverty, illiteracy, and hunger - wars against everything but *hope and glory*.

Saigon, the former capital of the French protectorate of Indochina, was swiftly renamed Ho Chi Minh City soon after communist tanks rattled through the Presidential Palace - now the *Reunification Palace* - gates in the early hours of April 30, 1975. The capital of today's Democratic Socialist Republic is now located 700 miles north in Hanoi. With Ho Chi Minh City's current population hovering around the 8 million mark, it occurs to me that a wartime Tan Son Nhut exists now only in faded generalities, with 60 percent of Vietnamese being born after 1975. Attempting to locate long gone landmarks was a lesson in futility, although the world class Continental and Majestic Hotels, erected in the late 1800's along with a host of other grand old dames, *continue* to draw swarms of photo-snapping visitors daily.

Finally - something else I found *not* to have changed in 45 years - the odiferous presence of mildew, river sewerage, motorbike exhaust, exotic street food, and hot asphalt, all conspiring in a pungent panoply of sights and sounds echoing the cry of virtually every third world country across the globe.

While Vietnam remains a communist-controlled country, it's entrepreneurial, capitalist, free enterprise spirit thrives: Downtown's Ben Thanh Marketplace, for example, seething, vibrant, alive with shoppers jockeying for the best price on a wildly diverse range of products, foods, and services.

Not to be relegated to a footnote, Tuan and Lisa's wedding celebration went off without a hitch. Attended by accolade-showing guests from Europe, the America's, and Asia, including a large family contingent from Hanoi, sunny blue skies prevailed over the *Notre-Dame Basilica*. The elegantly simple ceremony was conducted by Father Cletus S. Culpepper on November 15, 2014 - almost nine years after he went rogue from a South L.A. Parish while attending a 30-day seminar in Nha Trang, Vietnam. His bishop has long since acquiesced. According to a very pensive Father Culpepper, "Vietnam was simply too beautiful a country to 'love and leave.'" In a quick, light-hearted note, he remarked that he had felt this way before about a tasty sand bass he had once hooked off the Manhattan Beach Pier.

Suddenly we were friends.

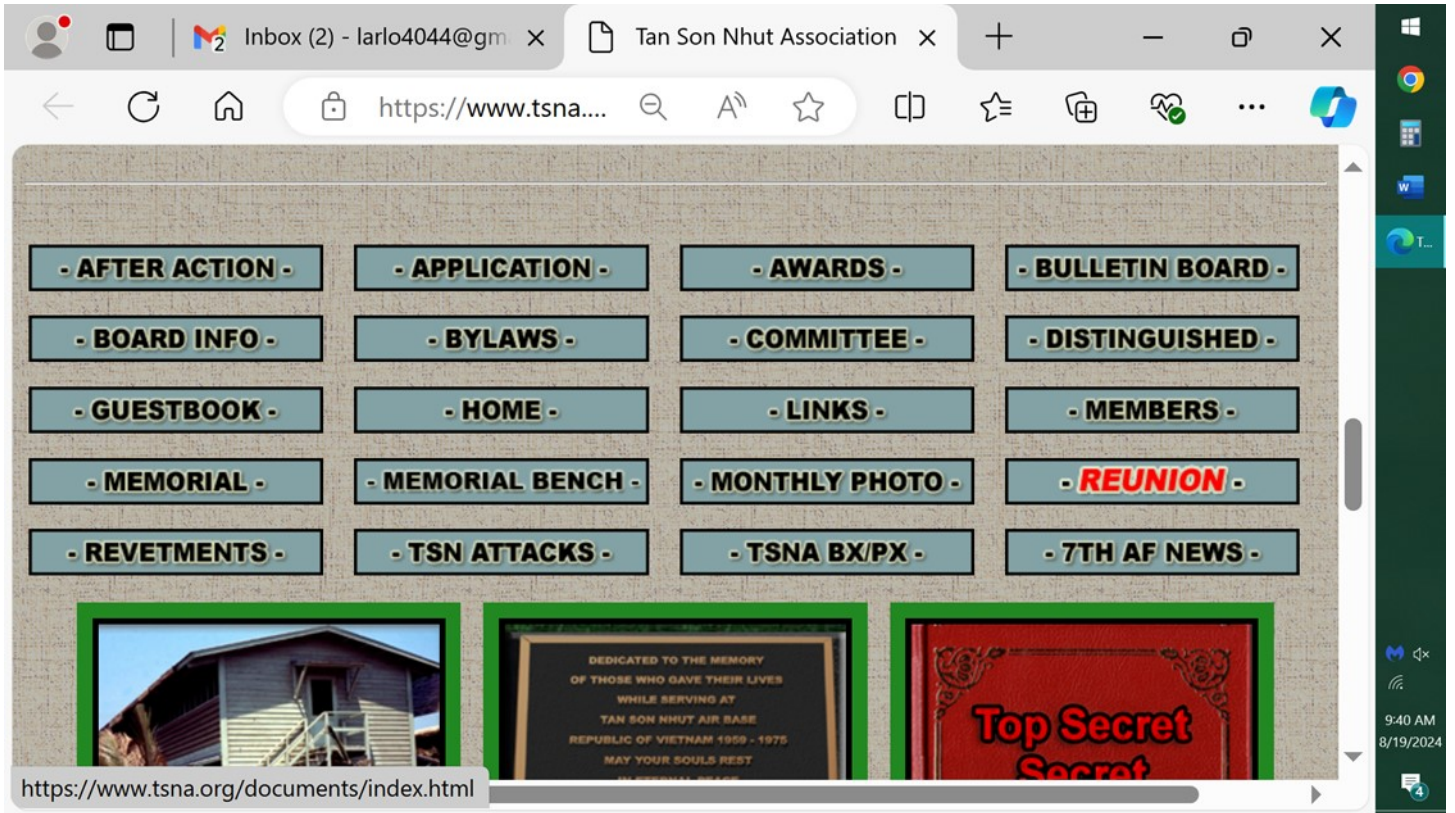
Despite Vietnam's turbulent history and the hard scrabble daily grind, he remains in Vietnam as Notre Dame's resident pastor in the ecclesiastical Province of Saigon. "I'm at home and at peace. I would wish this on anyone."

In the early seventies Henry Kissinger and Le Doc Tho leveled stares and accusations across the Paris peace table. Now, the unified nation of Vietnam re-enters our lives not as a violent intruder on the 5 o'clock news but, rather, as a pleasant reminder that the simple radiance of the world's heart and soul IS universal, regardless of political persuasion.

Now, more than four decades later, a reflective, grey-haired grandfather of nine discovers in childish amazement that a world known once is known again.

Come home, Number One GI. From the Delta to the DMZ, all is forgiven.

And somehow you know it is.



THE TSNA WEBSITE - [Tan Son Nhut Association \(tsna.org\) .](http://Tan Son Nhut Association (tsna.org) .)

How many times have you looked at it??

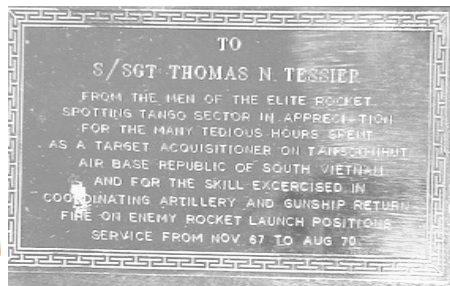
How many of the 20 “Buttons” have you clicked on and looked at-thoroughly??

Start checking them out!

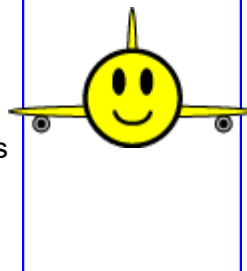
And don’t forget to write in with your thoughts on any subject!

EDITOR’S NOTE: Back in the March issue, I published an article by Tom Tessier.

He had also sent me some pictures, which I didn’t use at that time, but here they are now:



I am presuming that this was a 407 pound bear, and NOT that Tom came in #407 in a contest.



(Sorry for the clarity, but the glare on the plaque made things just a little difficult!)

EDITOR'S NOTE: In trying to make contact with one of our members regarding a bad email address, I was informed that he had passed away.

I decided to see if he had ever had anything in Revetments, and he had—in December 2011!

I decided to check it out, and I got approved through using the link below—and a little time filling out the thing!

And yea, I know. I got approved, and got a project number - but that's all so far!

It's official; DD-214's are NOW Online.

The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) has provided the following website for veterans to gain access to their DD-214's online:

[http://vetrecs.archives.gov/.](http://vetrecs.archives.gov/)

This may be particularly helpful when a veteran needs a copy of his DD-214 for employment purposes. NPRC is working to make it easier for veterans with computers and Internet access to obtain copies of documents from their military files.

Military veterans and the next of kin of deceased former military members may now use a new online military personnel records system to request documents.

Other individuals with a need for documents must still complete the Standard Form 180, which can be downloaded from the online web site. Because the requester will be asked to supply all information essential for NPRC to process the request, delays that normally occur when NPRC has to ask veterans for additional information will be minimized. The new web-based application was designed to provide better service on these requests by eliminating the records centers mailroom and processing time.

Please pass this information on to former military personnel you may know and their dependents.

Thanks to TSNA Member MSgt. Carl H. McKenzie for this info.

AND ANOTHER EDITOR'S NOTE:

I mentioned above that I was making contact with a member . . .

I actually mailed out via USPS, 35 letters to members whose email address keeps coming back when I send out the monthly Revetment reminder letters.

As of now, (August 31), I have received answers referring to just 12 of those letters.

Here is the list of names that I have not heard from:

Wayne **Cartier**, Anne **Coleman**, Michael **Cook**, William **Cooper**, Morris **Cutler**, Gary **Edwards**,

Robert **Fike**, John **Fitch**, Larry **Fritts**, James **Hayes**, Scott **Jones**, Keith **Krier**, Michael **Kutan**,

Michael **Pelto**, Jim **Riley**, Michael **Rivenbark**, Philip **Scott**, Gilbert **Simpson**, Edward **Voith**, Frank **Walker**,

Benjamin **White**, Richard **White**, Norman **Whitlow**.

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